

In his President's Message, approximately 6 months later, on oversupply of small animal practitioners (Can Vet J 2000;41:9-10), the tack has completely changed and reality creeps in as he talks of shrinking client bases, stagnating salaries, etc., which are precisely the economic conditions that affect all veterinary incomes. Unfortunately, his solution to this oversupply is poorly thought out.

The facts are that the supply of veterinarians is not set within Canada's borders anymore. There are veterinarians from all over the world practising in British Columbia. For instance, approximately 30 veterinarians, graduates of a single college in India, have registered to practice in British Columbia in recent years. Also, quite a few have come from South Africa, as part of that country's professional diaspora. Just as is happening in other professions in Canada, this will continue in veterinary medicine, as eager young veterinarians come to Canada seeking opportunity and to join friends, colleagues, and families. I should know. I came from Ireland to join a classmate already established in practice here. So, reducing the number of seats for Canadians at the veterinary colleges will have no effect on the number of small animal practitioners in this country.

A seat sale to well-off foreigners will supply extra funds to the veterinary colleges, which, I suspect, is the real reason for this idea's promulgation. This indeed will be a benefit to the veterinary colleges, where, we hear, extra money is badly needed. If this is the case, then this is what the debate should be about.

Attempting to get practitioners onside by suggesting that there will be an economic benefit to them is deceitful and patronizing. This will not be a "win-win" situation for the many bright young Canadians who still desperately want to become veterinarians, even if it is not the remuneratively rewarding profession it used to be. A large number of them will be shut out from the colleges, and no waffling or slick phraseology can hide or change this fact. This debate, if there is one, is about simple facts and numbers.

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Simple facts and numbers — A reply

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to Dr. O'Grady, as it allows me to clarify a few points.

Educational debt has been identified as one of the top concerns of practitioners across Canada. The amount of debt accumulated by the new graduate is not the responsibility of the employer, but I think the profession has to consider the average student debt and deal with that. If practice owners truly want to see more associates become financially involved in their practices at an earlier time, then the reality is that they will have to pay higher salaries, regardless of the financial state of the profession. I just don't see any alternative. To rely on government policy changes and wait for them to work their way through the system is part of the "never, never plan." It just won't happen in the foreseeable future — the practising profession will have to help itself. In fact, that initiative is already apparent in Ontario, where a recent follow-up OVMA economic survey has shown that increased incomes resulting from economic studies are already being shared with associates in some practices.

My comment on seat sales had nothing to do with educational debt but everything to do with my interpretation of the supply and demand side of the economic picture. The fact that the colleges could benefit financially was part of the spin-off that made the concept interesting, and was clearly stated. For example, the graduating class of OVC 1970 was comprised of a large number of American veterinary students. Most returned home after graduation, resulting in the lowest demographic unit of Canadian graduates in the last 50 years. The current economic condition of our profession is a multifactorial problem and, as CVMA president, it is my responsibility to raise the issues as I see them. Dr. O'Grady's comments certainly bring a different perspective to the issues.

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Need to distinguish between studies designed to give an unbiased answer and those not so designed

Dear Sir,

I have read, with interest, recent correspondence expressing various opinions on the application and value of alternative medical therapies. For a variety of reasons, I have been reviewing literature on the various treatment modalities included under the umbrella of alternative

therapies. Dr. Drosdovech asked us to be open-minded, at least in regard to homeopathy (Can Vet J 2000; 41:167). This is good advice, and I would add to it that we also need to retain the ability to read critically when it comes to the evaluation of efficacy for any particular

modality, whether new or old. In this regard, "beliefs" and "anecdotal" reports need to be recognized as a less rigorous approach in determining efficacy than a well-controlled trial, preferably blinded to the investigator and based on an adequate number of cases. We have seen earlier in this journal credible indications that the placebo effect occurs in animals, as it does in humans. A major problem with our evaluation of alternative therapies is not primarily that there is a lack of controlled studies on their efficacy, but that we have not distinguished sufficiently between studies designed to provide an unbiased answer and those that are not so designed. If Drs. Ramey,

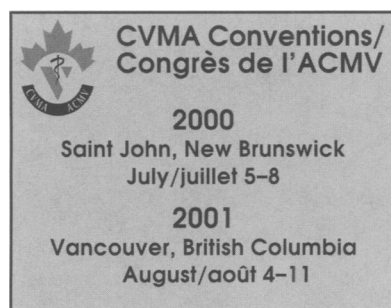
Imrie, and Bowles (Can Vet J 1999;40:840; Can Vet J 2000;41:3) are to be criticized for being negative in their evaluation of acupuncture and homeopathy, they can at least be given credit for having written a comment based on substantive studies.

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COMING EVENTS



ÉVÉNEMENTS À VENIR



JUNE/JUIN 2000

Veterinary Hospital Managers Association — Summer Meeting.

June 2-4, 2000 at the Hilton Toronto Airport in Toronto, Ontario. Payroll — Compensation, Marketing, Financial Reporting, Benchmarking, Inventory Management. Contact: VHMA, 48 Howard Street, Albany, New York 12207-1608 USA, tel.: (518) 433-8911, fax: (518) 463-8656, e-mail: vhma@caphill.com, Web site: www.vhma.org.

Science on Safari — Wildlife Immobilization Course. June 3-10, 2000 in Kruger National Park, South Africa. Contact: Science on Safari, Box 681, White River, South Africa; tel.: +27 13 751 2446; fax: +27 13 751 750013; e-mail: onsafari@global.co.za.

Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference. June 5-8, 2000 in Toronto, Ontario. Contact: ABIC, Ms. Sharon Murray, ABIC Conference Coordinator, tel.: (877) 925-2242, e-mail: siggroup@sk.sympatico.ca, Web site: www.abic.net.

Western College of Veterinary Medicine — June Conference.

June 8-10, 2000 at the WCVM in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Contact: Continuing Veterinary Education Section, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, 52 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5B4; tel.: (306) 966-7267; fax: (306) 966-7274; Web site: www.usask.ca/wcvm/juneconf.htm

Synbiotic and the Calgary Academy of Veterinary Medicine — Penn Hip Certification Clinic. June 24, 2000 in Calgary, Alberta, venue and times TBA. Registration cost: US \$750/person including a distractor; US \$500/person without. Technicians may attend at a cost of US \$75/person accompanied by a veterinarian. Contact: Dr. J.G. Carter, Douglas Square Pet Clinic, #136, 11520-24 Street, Calgary, Alberta T2Z 3E9; tel.: (403) 203-0775; fax: (403) 203-0779.

Small Animal Diagnostic Ultrasound Workshop. June 24-25, 2000 in Bedford Hills, New York, USA. Contact: Universal Seminars, Inc., 299 Adams Street, Bedford Hills, New York 10507 USA, tel.: (800) 842-0607.

39th Annual Symposium of the Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Science — Partnering for Optimal Animal Care and Use in Science. June 25-28, 2000 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario. Additional seminar available ("Practical Application of the Proposed CCAC Animal Facility Programming and Design Guidelines 2001"). For hotel reservations, contact the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 101 Lyon Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 5T9; tel.: (800) 227-6963; fax: (613) 237-2351. For registration, contact CALAS/ASCAL, P.O. Box 34122 RPO Fort Richmond, Manitoba R3T 5T5; tel.: (204) 261-7534; fax: (204) 261-7619.

Australian Veterinary Association — Annual Conference. June 25-30, 2000 at Rendezvous Observation City, Perth, Western Australia. Contact: AVA Conference Organising Service, 7 Phipps Place, Deakin ACT 2600 Australia; tel: +61 02 6285 3600; fax: +61 02 6285 3913.

JULY/JUILLET 2000

10th International Congress on Animal Hygiene. July 2-6, 2000 in Maastricht, The Netherlands. Contact: Royal Netherlands Veterinary Association, P.O. Box 14031, NL-3508 SB Utrecht, The Netherlands; fax: +31 30 251 17 87; e-mail: knmvd@pobox.accu.uu.nl.

Veterinary Conservation Biology in Australasia: Wildlife Health and Management in the New Millennium.

July 2-6, 2000 at the Taronga Zoo in Sydney, Australia. Contact: Dr. Larry Vogelnest, Taronga Zoo Veterinary and Quarantine Centre, P.O. Box 20, Mosman, New South Wales 2088 Australia, fax: +61 2 9978 4516, e-mail: lvogelnest@zoo.nsw.gov.au.

Advanced Echocardiography Workshop. July 15-16, 2000 in Bedford Hills, New York, USA. Contact: Universal Seminars, Inc., 299 Adams Street, Bedford Hills, New York 10507 USA, tel.: (800) 842-0607.

9th International Society for Animal Clinical Biochemistry. July 17-20, 2000 in Toulouse, France. Contact: V. FRAM RECEPTIF/France, 01, rue Lapeyrouse, 31000 Toulouse, France; tel.: +33 562 15 18 82; fax: +33 562 30 23 86; e-mail: receptif@fram.fr.

Hoof Trimmers Association — Hoof Health Conference 2000. July 20-22, 2000 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth, Minnesota, USA. Advanced registration by June 1, 2000, contact: Nichelle Martin, tel.: (608) 355-7671, e-mail: nichelle@midplains.net.

2nd International Veterinary Vaccines and Diagnostics Conference. July 23-28, 2000 in Oxford, England. Contact: IVVDC 2000 Secretariat, Institute for Animal Health, Compton RG20 7NN, United Kingdom; Web site: www.iah.bbsrc.ac.uk.

Veterinary Homeopathy Course.

July 26-29, 2000 at the College Inn in Guelph, Ontario. Case-taking, repertory and materia medica, remedy selection, evaluating responses, managing acute and chronic cases, practical use of homeopathy in a clinical setting. Contact: Dr. David Evans, Natural Care Clinic for Pets, RR#3 Chester Basin, Nova Scotia B0J 1K0, tel.: (902) 275-3553, fax: (902) 275-2435.